

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HADDONFIELD

Greenfield Hall

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May 2001

THE VIOLIN – ITS PLACE IN OUR CULTURE, PAST AND PRESENT AN EVENING WITH WILBUR E. WAMSLEY AT GREENFIELD HALL MAY 16, 7:30 PM

Take a walk down Tanner Street someday. It's one of the oldest streets in town and within the first block you'll see a two-story twin house with a violin backing mounted beside the door. This attractive house, built in the late eighteenth century, is now the home of W. E. Wamsley Restorations, Inc., Dealers and Makers of Fine Violins, Violas, Cellos and Bows. If you venture inside, you'll be struck not only with the handsome appearance of the instruments on display, but also with the beautifully restored floors and furnishings, reminiscent of the building's period.

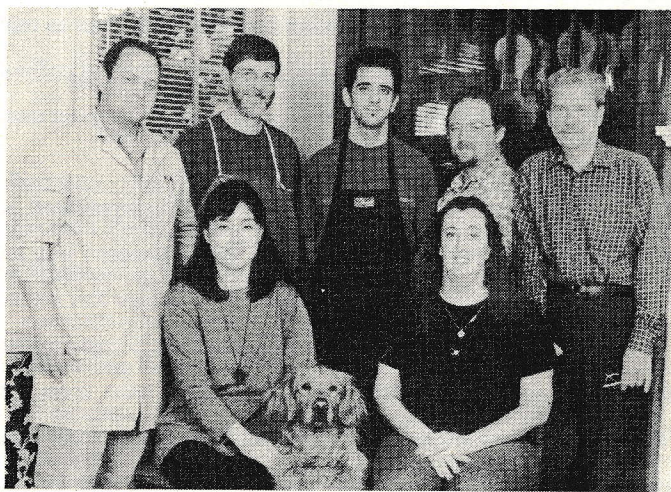
Wilbur E. Wamsley, founder of the firm which has been located in Haddonfield since 1998, will be our speaker at the May 16 meeting of the Society. In his talk, **The Violin – Its Place in Our Culture, Past and Present**, he will relate background stories about this instrument which adds so much warmth and intensity to chamber and orchestra music.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Mr. Wamsley was a music major who began his training after college as an apprentice violinmaker with the prestigious firm of William Moennig and Son. While there, he received intensive training in the difficult field of fine restoration from some of the world's most renowned violin masters and experts. In 1991, after 16 years, he left Moennig and Son to start his own firm specializing in the restoration and sale of antique and rare instruments of the violin family.

Today Mr. Wamsley and his staff are kept busy with clients from the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Boston Symphony,

the National Symphony and numerous others, as well as performers throughout Europe and Asia. The Philadelphia Orchestra has retained him for the maintenance and appraisal of its stringed instruments. He teaches violin making and repair and lectures on those subjects as well as on the history and development of the violin.



Wilbur Wamsley, left, and his Restorations Staff,
including the Golden Retriever,
at 26 Tanner Street in Haddonfield

Join us for an extraordinary evening on Wednesday, May 16, at 7:30. Hear about the rich history and tradition of the violin making trade, dating back to the 16th century, and of the legacy and technical excellence which is being imparted right here in our own community.

President's Page

by Joseph Murphy

Volunteers. They are the ones who give life to an organization like the Historical Society and make us an active part of the community. They are the heart of the Historical Society.

Some contribute baked goods for our sales, greens at Holly Festival or items to sell at the Village Fair. Some lend us items for the Halloween Haunted House. One may bring an old artifact from a parent's attic that is just the thing a visitor to the Village Fair will prize as a hidden treasure. Others may give us books that they have read and now want to share with others.

Many of you generously give us your time. That is time you could be spending at home reading a book or surfing the web on your computer. Instead of sitting in front of the TV complaining that there is nothing interesting on, you are out making a difference and enjoying time with others.

Those who volunteer their time make an especially valuable contribution to the Society. But they also get back the pleasure of good times and good company. You can see this each June at the Village Fair. It is a busy time for the Society with many activities to be coordinated. Each type of item that is being sold must be strategically placed. We need to have "security" arranged, so the early birds don't overwhelm us until the official opening. There are refreshments to be served, consignment items to be displayed, and entertainers to be arranged. It is a lot of work, but it is also a great deal of fun.

Halloween is another example. Greenfield Hall is decorated for the fright and delight of Haddonfield's children. Creepy, crawly things have to be positioned for the maximum effect. The helpers from the high school need to be put in place. All the cob webs and green light bulbs have to be installed. There is much to be done. And then, when a night of great fun is over, everything has to be restored to its original condition. But while we put away the Halloween artifacts, we each relive the joyful squeals of youngsters, who had no idea a Historical Society could be so scary - or so much fun.

Volunteers also include those who share their own historical interests with the community through displays and exhibits. Whatever they collect or restore, they find a welcoming place in the Historical Society where they can work with others who share that interest. They also find they can reach out to others in the community who may be ready to discover that a part of history belongs in their daily lives. Some of our members even volunteer to make presentations at our meetings. These presentations may cover such subjects as the architecture of the town, a favorite type of collection, or a part of the town's history. This gives them an opportunity to share their interests with our members, and can lead to even more involvement like an exhibit on their topic, or a monograph to add to our publications.

Volunteers step up to the front to head committees, join the Society's board, or become officers. Many times this is the natural result of pursuing an interest that has blossomed into a major activity at the Society. These volunteers help keep the day-to-day business of the Society in order, helping to assure that we will be there for future Haddonfield history lovers.

Some of our volunteers have adopted the Society and are with us at every event. Some see to it that our collections are well ordered and preserved. Some help researchers who come to the Society for assistance in tracking family or house histories. Volunteers have turned forgotten corners of Greenfield Hall into wonderful exhibits that draw visitors from throughout the region. But even those who just drop off one item or spend one hour at one event are heroes in my book. They are here, keeping the Historical Society a vibrant organization that is part of what makes Haddonfield such a wonderful community.

So when you read each of our newsletters, please give some thought to how you could contribute, and how much fun you could have stepping back into history even for a few minutes in the company of the wonderful members who share that interest with you.

RECEPTION FOR RICHARD BIRD

The Society and the Haddonfield Public Library held a farewell reception for Volunteer Richard Bird on Friday evening, April 6. Richard, who wrote the grant which obtained the New Jersey Historical Commission aid for our library and later developed the new library database along with Kathy Tassini, has moved to North Carolina with his wife, Sally. Our thanks and our best wishes for their happiness go with them.

THE ANNUAL VILLAGE FAIR ❖ ❖ SATURDAY, JUNE 2

The coming of spring means that our annual Village Fair can't be far away. **Saturday, June 2, is the date, from 10 AM to 3 PM.** It is one of the Society's most important fund-raisers and over the years has become the time to get together with friends and neighbors, the time to meet the new people in town.

Back in the 1960's, the Woman's Committee, under the chairmanship of Mrs. William Tomlinson, organized a Flea Market to generate income which would be used to improve the newly-acquired Greenfield Hall. Over the years, that concept has evolved into the Fair as we know it today. Just as in the beginning, members still supply most of the items to be sold as well as the manpower to do the organizing and selling.

So, invite your family, friends and neighbors to meet at Greenfield Hall on June 2nd. Our garage will be full of treasures and bargains galore. Old tools will be offered for sale and the always-popular strawberries will be available, along with a kitchen filled with baked goods. Jewelry, books, and commemoratives will be sold; snacks and lunch will be served throughout the day. Add in some special treats – Tom Patton and the Haddonfield Pick-up Band starting at 10:45 and Dave the Balloon Dude throughout the morning -- and you'll have a day to remember.

You'll also be able to enjoy a tour of Greenfield Hall, the beautiful headquarters of the Society, on Fair day. Guides will be on hand to tell about the various rooms. The basement is filled with a treasure of old tools and a bedroom is home to an array of antique dolls. The Museum Shop, with souvenirs and commemoratives, will also be open for business.

CONSIGNMENT ITEMS

Once again we'll be handling items on consignment. Items valued at \$100 or more will be accepted. If the item is sold, the Society will keep 15% of the sale price; otherwise, the article will be returned to its owner.

DELIVERIES

You'll be able to deliver items to the garage at Greenfield Hall starting Monday, May 21 between 9 AM and noon every day until Fair Day. If no one is available when you come, leave your contributions at the side garage door.

If you're not able to bring your contributions to Greenfield Hall, please call us at the office, 429-7375, or call the

coordinator of the garage sales, Tracy Marchetta, at 354-0042. Sheila Hawkes, 795-1290 and Peggy Russell, 429-1152 will pick up items from senior citizens. If you have questions, give us a call.

YOU CAN HELP!

Help us make this one of our most successful Village Fairs. Here are some ideas of things you might want to contribute:

- ◇ Baked goods and jellies (call Karen Weaver at 428-3396)
- ◇ Books and toys
- ◇ Antiques and furniture
- ◇ Tools
- ◇ Jewelry, collectibles and vintage clothing
- ◇ Pictures and frames
- ◇ Your ideas
- ◇ Your time: making phone calls, setting up on Fair Day, creating signs, selling on the big day.

If your friends would like to have a place to "get rid of" things they no longer want, invite them to contribute to our Fair. All donations are tax deductible for federal income tax purposes.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Nominating Committee, including Jack Tarditi, Chairman, Joe Haro, Pat Lennon and Bob Marshall, have presented the following slate to be voted on at the general meeting on Wednesday, May 16:

Corresponding Secretary.....Helene Zimmer-Loew

Recording Secretary.....Pat Lennon

Treasurer.....Eugene D'Orazio

Trustees:

Term Expiring 2004

Deborah Mervine Shirley Raynor

Carol Smith Jack Tarditi

Term Expiring 2002 (unexpired term of Marge Engleman)

P. Markley Heston, Jr.

Installation of officers will follow the voting at the May meeting. Please plan to attend and give our new officers enthusiastic support.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

by Kathy Tassini

Thanks to the Collection Conservation Grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, we have had a very busy winter moving materials into acid free storage and organizing and re-housing the large photograph collection of the Society. In addition, we have been refining the new library database program and adding collections data to the database, making it an important and valuable research tool.

As a result of some major cost savings under the original grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, we have also been permitted to purchase a second computer for the library which is due to arrive shortly. This second computer will permit us to have volunteers entering collections data much more consistently and rapidly. As the database grows, access to the information in the collection becomes more readily available. Actual handling of the materials will be reduced as researchers are able to eliminate items from their searches without actually having to see specific items.

I would like to thank two volunteers who are leaving the area and will no longer be with us. These two gentlemen have given many hours to the Society Library. Mike Sarf was one of our Monday evening conservation volunteers who helped with re-housing much of the ledger collection and has been active in the work of sorting, identifying and conserving the photograph collection. Mike is moving to Pennsylvania. Richard Bird, who has been a Trustee of the Society, also wrote the N.J.H.C. grant for the library and is the prime developer of the new database. He and his wife are moving to North Carolina, although he continues to be available via email to help take care of the database program. His contributions to both the Historical Society and Haddonfield Public Library have been tremendously valuable and he will be sincerely missed by each organization.

With the coming of Memorial Day, library hours will change to the usual summer hours. Beginning June 4th we will be open on Mondays and Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:30 for June and July. Our Sunday openings for the summer will be on Sunday, June 3rd and Sunday, July 1st from 1-3 PM. Like the rest of the Society, the library closes for the month of August!

Finally I would like to acknowledge some recent donations to the Society Library. Sincere thanks to the following for their important contributions:

Mike Mathis, 21 photographs of Fargo Homes and Max Odlen Develooper, 1956-1957

Jean Gutsmuth, a book owned by John Gill VII, "Our Wild Orchids"

Mary Scola, photographs of 141 Warwick Road

Stuart Lyons, records of the Haddonfield Stamp Club, 1971-1981

N.J. State Archives, photocopy of the Deed for New Haddonfield from John Haddon to John and Elizabeth Estaugh, Mar. 27, 1722

Mark and Rachel Heston, genealogies relating to Samuel Hudson Weeks, Sr.(1861-1947), Thomas W. Tanser, Sr. (1754-1831), and Roberts Underdown (1842-1926)

Mary Bauer, miscellaneous materials including a map of Haddon Farms Estates, 1926, reunion of the class of 1883 of the Haddonfield Public School and miscellaneous obituaries and programs of local events

Camden County Historical Society via Patrick Matlack, a photocopy of the Joseph Kaighn/Mary Estaugh Marriage Certificate, 1727

Gloucester County Historical Society via Charlesanna Fallstick, copy of Ruth Triol's Collings Family Genealogy

The Society is now online! You can reach us at hadhistsoc@netcarrier.com

any time of the day. Leave us a message and we'll

get back to you as soon as possible.

THE MISSING SAMPLER OF REBECCA GILL WILLITS (1821-1904)

by Harriet Gotchel Monshaw

When guiding visitors through Greenfield Hall, the home of the Historical Society of Haddonfield, I'm often asked whether any of the furniture or accessories now in the house belonged to the builder, John Gill 4th, and his family. In response, I point out the French and Gill fire buckets on the mantle in the dining/keeping room and the sampler of Mary Gill Roberts (1743-1827), the aunt of John Gill 4th. I then highlight a fourth item, the Rebecca Gill sampler, even though I can show visitors only a photograph of it. To me, this sampler is most interesting because much is known about the life of the person who embroidered it. That person was Rebecca Morgan Gill Willits, second child and oldest daughter of John Gill 4th, the man who built Greenfield Hall in 1841.

Why are samplers, those oftentimes faded, barely readable framed embroideries, so intriguing to historic researchers and collectors alike? Antique samplers are often more than decorative items; they provide important evidence of the education of young girls and sometimes include genealogical information about the needle worker and her family.

Rebecca's sampler was worked in 1830 when she was nine years old. The design is primarily a border pattern using three different kinds of alphabets. Two of the alphabets are in cross-stitch while the last and largest alphabet is in eyelet stitch. Practice eyelet stitches are scattered randomly, attesting to the fact that this was a learning sampler. Learning to sew and working a sampler was an important part of the education of young girls. They began by learning to embroider letters of the alphabet, not only to learn sewing techniques but also to mark linens with the initials of the owner. Household linens were expensive items at that time and were often laundered outside the home.

Rebecca Gill was born August 5, 1821 to 26-year old John and 20-year old Sarah Hopkins Gill. The Gill's first child, John S., had died at the age of 17 months in 1820. Rebecca's parents were Quakers (Society of Friends), and thus she was a birthright member of that religion. She would remain a Quaker all her life. Little is known about her formal education. More than likely she was tutored at home or attended one of the small private schools for girls that were prevalent at the time. It is not likely that she would have attended the Haddonfield Friends School even though her grandfather was a member of the Friends School committee. When she was a young girl, the school was mainly a secondary school for boys.

Another factor in her education may have been the fact that her mother died when she was fourteen years old. Rebecca may have been needed at home and thus not have been able to attend more formal schooling such as Westtown Friends School, a Friends coeducational boarding school in Westtown, Pa. Both of her younger brothers, John and William, would attend at the ages of 13 and 12, respectively. In any case, learning to sew and embroider would have been part of her education.

In the late 1890's her niece, Mary Gill Hopkins, asked Rebecca to contribute to the manuscript, "Family Reminiscences." Memories of school were not in Rebecca's thoughts at that time. Instead, she spoke of the house in which she was born and of her grandfather, John Gill 3rd (1758-1838). She remembered accurately

the homestead plantation, now 80 Lane of Acres, where she lived until she was six years old. She provided details of the interior even though it had been changed many years before. She remembered how she had disliked her new home, Mountwell (the site at 310 Centre Street). When asked by her grandfather whether she liked the new home as well as the old, she said she replied emphatically, "No, I do not, grandfather."

Rebecca said that her grandfather was fond of teasing his grandchildren. When Rebecca was five, still living at the homestead, they were walking together under a row of plum trees. "Beckie, these are my trees," said her grandfather. She replied, "No, Grandfather, they are my father's." As soon as she could, she ran to the kitchen and asked the servants, "How can it be when Father has all to do with this place?" She did not understand that, although her father managed the plantation, he did not own it and would not own it until he inherited it upon his father's death in 1838.

Other remembrances of her grandfather included the time she was waving goodbye to him. She was dressed in a chintz gown with a scalloped white apron. He told her, "Beckie, thee looks very fine but I'm afraid thee wears too big sleeves." Her grandfather was a strict Quaker and believed in the rules of the Society regarding "plainness and simplicity."



Rebecca Gill Willits

When Rebecca was 20, her family moved again. This time it was into her father's new mansion, now known as Greenfield Hall, at 343 East King's Highway. Along with the new home came her father's new bride, Elizabeth French Gill (1794-1854). Were Rebecca and her stepmother on good terms? I'll let Rebecca speak for herself. She reported to her niece that her stepmother was a woman of fine character, agreeable, popular, firm and decided, and that she bestowed wise and sound advice to her stepdaughters.

At the age of 26, on December 30, 1847, Rebecca married Samuel Smith Willits (1817-1868) at the Haddonfield Friends

Meeting. Later that day, Charles Gilpin, mayor of Philadelphia, officiated at a civil ceremony. Samuel was a widower with a four-year old child, Samuel A. Willits (1843-1919). Rebecca and Samuel resided at 428 King's Highway East (the house was moved to 22 Roberts Avenue in 1914 for the development of Morehouse Lane). They had three children, John in 1849, Charles in 1854 and Ann in 1855.



Samuel Smith Willits

Samuel's coal and lumber business was located at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Tanner Street in town. In 1854, Samuel, along with his father-in-law and other prominent businessmen of Camden County, incorporated to form the White Horse Turnpike Company. They built a road which extended from the junction of Haddonfield and the Camden Turnpike (Haddon Avenue) to Clements Bridge, ultimately to Long-a-Coming (Berlin). Today the road is known as the White Horse Pike. Samuel also served as a freeholder representing Haddon Township from 1858 to 1865.

Rebecca's husband died in 1868 after a brief but painful illness. Her stepson, Samuel, was 25 years old and her three children were 19, 14 and 12. Nevertheless, she "felt alone." In a letter to her two younger children who were attending Westtown School, she writes rather plaintively that even though "I always have a fire in the dining room, I mostly sit in the breakfast room this winter it being, for a person who is alone, more cheerful." Later in the same letter she writes about local news and then continues "although it has not been three weeks since I saw you, I feel as if I wanted to see you again very badly. Tongue cannot express the interest I feel for your present and future happiness desiring you to be directed by the Good Spirit in all your doings and so secure a happy life both here and hereafter."

John Gill 4th died in 1884, leaving his daughter, Rebecca, Greenfield Hall and money for its upkeep. In 1895, her younger sister, Anna, died at the age of 71, leaving the bulk of her estate to Rebecca's son, John. Rebecca suffered a stroke the day after her

sister's death but would continue to live at Greenfield Hall with her sons and her daughter-in-law for the rest of her life.

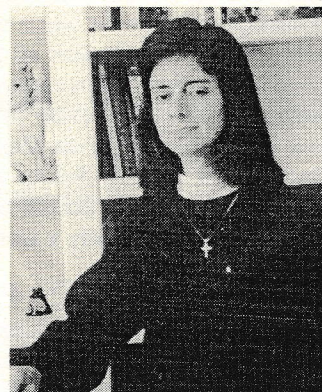
On the observance of Rebecca's 77th birthday, a friend and relative, Ruth S. Abbott, reflected on their present lives. "I congratulate thee on the peace and domestic comfort thou art at present favored with. Thou and I have encountered many storms and seeming ills and adverse currents in our voyage through this life so far and now...we are permitted smoother sailing and a more quiet sea, tranquil minds and atmosphere around us."

Rebecca died on June 8 1904 at the age of 82. She was laid to rest at the Friends Cemetery in Haddonfield on June 11.

WHERE IS THE SAMPLER TODAY?

In 1998, Bonnie Lee Platt, a primary school teacher from North Carolina, was in Haddonfield doing genealogical research at the Baptist Cemetery where her forbears are buried. Bonnie was born in Woodbury, NJ, but had lived in North Carolina since the age of eight. She happened to pass Greenfield Hall and noticed the name "Gill" on the nameplate outside the door. Not having time to stop, she later wrote a letter to the Historical Society asking if the Society knew anything about a Rebecca Gill since she had a child's sampler signed "Rebecca Gill 1830."

Bonnie believed that the sampler had been handed down in her family by her great-great-grandmother, Ann Hillman Dobbs (1840-1924). She had received the sampler from her mother's sister, Ann Dobbs Barto. This aunt had been thinking of selling the sampler at a garage sale but first asked Bonnie if she wanted it. Although the sampler was frayed and tattered, Bonnie took it. As far as she knew at the time, she was not related to any member of the Gill family.



Bonnie Lee Platt, present owner of Rebecca's sampler

She is, however, descended from a long line of former Haddonfield and Camden County residents. Her connection, it turns out, is not with the Gill family but with the French family. Her great-great-great-great-grandfather, Richard French, was the brother of Charles French, the great-grandfather of Elizabeth French Gill, John Gill 4th's second wife and stepmother of Rebecca Gill Willits. What better place could the sampler reside than in the possession of a French, except, of course, at Greenfield Hall, the last home of Rebecca Gill Willits?

REBECCA'S CHILDREN

Many women's lives and interests are inextricably bound to those of their children. To understand Rebecca better, we should know something about her children.

John Gill Willits 1849-1920

Rebecca's first child, John Gill Willits, who attended Westtown School from the age of 15 to 17, appeared not to have inherited either the Willits' or the Gills' academic or business acumen. He did, however, inherit the bulk of his Aunt Anna Gill's (1823-1895) estate as well as the bulk of his mother's estate in trust, including Greenfield Hall in 1904. Could these legacies be the reason John didn't feel the necessity to strive harder to achieve business success? Was he living off his family's reputation? These questions remain unanswered.

Rebecca, however, did recognize her son's shortcomings. Although John was 55 when Rebecca died, she did not feel that he had enough fiscal responsibility to leave her estate to him outright. Instead, she bequeathed the majority of her estate to him in a trust for which John and Rebecca's stepson, Samuel A. Willits, were appointed trustees. John and his wife, a former Westtown Friends classmate, Anna Eastburn (1850-1937), whom he had married in 1894, jointly received the interest. They were both in their mid-40s and had no children. Rebecca did allow John to make testamentary disposition of the residue of her estate.

Perhaps John's lack of business success could be attributed to bad luck or bad timing. During the 1870's he was in a series of partnerships in the paint manufacturing business. He invested a large sum of money for a new manufacturing building near Crystal Lake in Haddon Township, but, as luck would have it, the extremely successful John Lucas Paint Company on the lake in Gibbsboro (headwaters of Coopers Creek) was his competition. (Both lakes were chosen for the purity of their water, free from lime and iron-salts, necessary in the production of paint.) The difference in size of the advertisements in the *West Jersey Press* between the Haddonfield Paint Company and the Lucas Paint Company says everything.

The lack of success in the paint business did not deter John from attempting to find his niche in other pursuits. These were listed in Haddonfield yearly directories as in oil (1884-6), paint & varnish (1891-2), mosaic & cement (1895), real estate (1908-10), insurance (1914) and stockbroker (obit, 1920). He apparently didn't succeed in any of these ventures and was forced to sell Greenfield Hall in 1914 after attempting to keep the mansion as long as he was financially able, even to the extent of converting the home "into a combination nursing and old-folks home."

But money isn't everything. From all accounts he did his duty toward his family. He looked after his ill, younger brother Charles and kept intact the family heirlooms with which he had been entrusted, finally giving or bequeathing them to members of the Gill and Willits family. These heirlooms had been in his family for generations if not centuries; a few had belonged to Elizabeth Haddon Estaugh. Other items he treasured concerned his deceased sister, Ann, her letters, her photos, a lock of her hair and the many

letters of condolence on her death. He made provisions for his wife, Anna, in his will, even though she had to borrow money from her niece, Esther Willits Thomas, during the last years of her life.

John Gill Willits died suddenly in 1920 at the age of 70, one month after the death of his older half-brother, Samuel A. Willits. He was "ill only a week before [his] death with heart and lung trouble." He was then residing at 15 Grove Street. John's will was dated one day before his death. He lies buried in the Friends Cemetery in Haddonfield. John's widow died in 1937 at the ripe old age of 87. Her last years were spent at the Estaugh Home for retired Quakers at 56 Haddon Avenue (torn down in the mid-1960's). The Estaugh Home was the forerunner of Medford Leas, a retirement community in Medford.

Charles Willits 1854-1922

In contrast to John, Rebecca's second child, Charles, appeared to be full of promise. He attended Westtown School from the age of 12 to 17. Before he left the school, he had become an assistant teacher. As a young man he followed in his maternal grandfather's footsteps and began to purchase land. At his death, he still owned a few tracts of land. One was an 18-acre tract of land on the corner of the Camden-Marlton Road (Rt. 70) and the Burlington-Salem Road (Kings Highway), until recently known as the Ellisburg Circle. He had purchased the property in 1881 from the Ellis family who had owned the property since 1768.

The last piece of property Charles purchased was in 1891 when he was 39 years old; the property was along Whiskey Road (Chapel Ave.) and the Moorestown-Stoy's Landing Road (Rt. 38). However, Charles' mental health was declining. According to family notes, he had some very eccentric tendencies. He liked to preach to whomever would listen. He would go to nearby fields and preach to the cows, preaching so loudly that he could be heard as far away as Haddon Avenue. He was never listed in any Haddonfield directory as having an occupation or business except in the 1891-1892 issue in which he was listed as a "farmer." At the time of his mother's death in 1904, he was apparently living on the third floor of Greenfield Hall. His mother made special provisions for him in her will. Along with certain household items, she bequeathed him most of the contents of the third floor and set aside \$10,000 (\$250,000 in 2001 dollars) in trust for his care.

Charles continued to live with his older brother, John, at Greenfield Hall, until his mental condition had deteriorated so severely that John could no longer care for him. In about 1909, at the age of 55, Charles was committed to the New Jersey State Mental Institution in Trenton. The report of his condition by Drs. Cotton and Means characterized his lunacy as "constitutional defective with mental deterioration and emotional instability... and that [we believe that he] is in no way capable of governing himself." Charles was confined there until his death in 1922 at the age of 66. He had outlived all of his siblings.

Ann Gill Willits 1855-1869

Perhaps the saddest story concerned Rebecca's third child, Ann. Although Rebecca's brothers attended Westtown Friends School, Rebecca and her sister Anna did not. She rectified that

situation, however, by having her daughter Ann attend. Ann entered Westtown School at the age of 11, in May of 1867, the same year as her brother Charles. Annie was closely "attached" to her Mother. In a letter dated January 3, 1869, after writing about arriving safely at Westtown and having "catsup for dinner it was pretty good considering," she writes a postscript that said "Please write soon for nothing gives me more pleasure than to receive letters from thee."

In the next letter written on "writing letter day" dated Sunday, March 14, 1869, she writes that "I was much disappointed in not getting a letter from home last week but hope it will be along before very long. How I thought of home last fifth day [Thursday] and longed to be with you to have a good Quarterly [Friends] Meeting dinner, had you much company? ... Mother, I'm afraid I would not have quite enough money to carry me through ... the end of the session." In her postscript she calculated the exact time until the end of the session "1,468,800 seconds, 24,480 minutes, 408 hours, 17 days before we go home."

But she would not "go home" on March 31 as she had expected. In the last letter she would write to her mother, dated a few days later, March 17, she mentions that "there has been considerable sickness ... bad colds, head aches and at one time there were 27 boys in the nursery [infirmary] and 15 girls but I have kept up through it all and I believe Charlie [her brother] has also, although yesterday afternoon I had quite a bad earache and headache I was bound not to go to the nursery and so I did not and I am now very well again after a good nights sleep (with my little blanket under my ear). [At the 1868-69 winter session, the student body consisted of 129 boys and 89 girls.] We had for our supper sixth day [Friday] boiled milk with bread in but thee knows I do not like milk very much so it was not very much of a luxury to me ... I am afraid I shall need a new pair of gloves to wear home thee knows I only had an old pair of Charlie's and thee knows we like to look pretty nice going home in the [train] cars with all the girls and boys but if it is not worth while it does not make much difference. How is Brother Sam by this time I wonder, give [a] great deal of love to him and keep a large portion for thyself I must close now. Thy attached Daughter Annie Please write soon." [Note: Supper was served at 5 PM; dinner was the main meal and served in the middle of the day. Water was drunk directly from a large jug and then passed around to the other students.]

Her last hours alive were remembered and then recorded 41 years later by her classmate and friend, M. Eleanor Ash Magill, with whom she had shared a collecting room desk. "I was in the nursery myself [the nurse on duty was Mary C. Palmer] when she took sick and I remember how she would have me to hold her head when the pain was severe. I was with her until she grew so ill that the caretakers became alarmed and her mother was sent for. She no doubt had great thirst from fever for I remember of her saying: 'if mother knew that I was sick she would send me some white grapes,' her exact words... one of the teachers went to West Chester and got white grapes for her. I was pleased to give her some oranges which I happened to have."

Rebecca arrived a day or so later. Her daughter passed away second day [Monday] March 22, 1869. On that evening Rebecca "had several of [Annie's] little girl friends to sit in the

parlor with her. She had [Eleanor] to sit close by her side and she held [her] hand all evening. Her grief was too intense for tears or words and we sat for the most part silent."

Annie's classmate, Eleanor Magill, later questioned the diagnosis of Dr. Isaac Massey, (1836-1898), of West Chester, the attending doctor, although his credentials were impeccable. He had graduated with first honors from Jefferson Medical College and had served in the Civil War as a surgeon. The school's General Committee minutes noted that Ann Gill was "attacked with pneumonia about two weeks before the close of the winter session; and after a few days was removed by death in the 14th year of her age. This solemn event, whilst bringing a feeling of sadness over the whole household, has, we trust, proved an instructive though touching lesson to many of her school mates, by whom this unlooked-for removal is keenly felt."

Ann's death was the only one that year. No mention was made in the minutes of an epidemic as had been in former years: typhoid in 1864 and 1867 and measles in 1870. The same minutes further expressed that the winter of 1869 had been "unusually good except for the death of Annie Willits."

But perhaps Rebecca's sending her daughter to Westtown may have been worth the grief. As Annie's friend, Eleanor, wrote, "Life at Westtown was so simple and yet so full of meaning. Partly because we were children, perhaps, but in large measure because we were living the Simple Life."

Samuel Abbott Willits 1843-1919

Fortunately, someone in Rebecca's life would be a continuing strength -- her stepson and her children's half brother, Samuel Abbott Willits. Samuel had attended Westtown Friends School, entering at the age of 13 in 1857 until the age of 19 in 1863. He worked with his father in the coal and lumber business, and, upon the death of his father, successfully managed the family business, expanding it to include hardware and fire insurance. He was also a trustee of the Haddonfield Library Company.

In 1870 at the age of 27, he married Abigail Evans (1842-1935) whose family owned Evans Mill (by Evans Pond near the Haddonfield Mews). Their families had always been close friends. Samuel and Abigail, who lived at 49 Grove Street, had five children, Rebecca's only grandchildren. Samuel died December 14, 1919 and was buried at the Friends Cemetery in Haddonfield.

Two of Samuel's children, Josiah E. Willits and Esther Willits Thomas, would assume some of the family's responsibilities. Josiah became guardian of his Uncle Charles. Both Josiah and Esther would settle the legally complicated estates of John and his wife, Anna, of Charles, and finally the estate of Rebecca which was not completed until 1937.

THE ENDURING LEGACY

The next time you see a sampler, I hope you will be reminded that within the seemingly simple design are the threads of an intricate life--in many instances the only part of the legacy of many women that still survives.

ABOUT THE ARTICLE

The author of the previous monograph, Harriet Gotchel Monshaw, one of our faithful volunteers, is a docent in Greenfield Hall and an avid researcher. She has presented programs about members of the Gill family and wrote a book, *Elizabeth French Gill, 1794-1854: First Mistress of Greenfield Hall*, which was published by the Society in 1998. The book includes many photographs which give us a glimpse of the world of Haddonfield's landed gentry in the 19th century. It is available in our Museum Shop.

Primary sources for the monograph include: *This Is Haddonfield, Lost Haddonfield, Elizabeth French Gill 1794-1854: First Mistress of Greenfield Hall*, Prowell's *History of Camden County* and genealogical research by Bonnie Lee Platt. Harriet gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the tireless researchers of the Library of the Historical Society of Haddonfield: Mary Jane Freedley (sampler expert), Elizabeth A. Lyons, Marion C. Willits (Willits genealogist), and especially Katherine M. Tassini, archivist; and the archivists at the Westtown Friends School Archives, Mary Brooks and Kevin Gallagher.

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CITIZEN OF THE YEAR, JOHN REISNER

We are happy to add our congratulations to all those offered to John Reisner, this year's *Haddonfield Citizen of the Year*. John, who grew up in Haddonfield, practices law in town and has contributed as a volunteer to the life of our community in many ways. The Historical Society is just one of the groups benefiting from his free legal counsel over the years. His extensive service to the community was recognized also two years ago when the Haddonfield Civic Association named him recipient of the Alfred E. Driscoll Community Service Award.

One of his pleasures is playing in the Philharmonic and Marching Band Society (the Pick-up Band). We hope to see him beating his drum again when the band performs at the June Village Fair.

THE BIG WINNER

We had been waiting for a long time and finally, at the Candlelight Dinner on March 21, the moment arrived. If you had purchased a ticket to host the Dinner in the Grand Style, this

was the time to hold your breath. All the stubs were shaken around, the lucky one was chosen...and it turned out to belong to Ed O'Malley. Ed, who works for Commerce National and lives in Marlton with his wife, Barbara, and their six children, chose April 28 as the Saturday evening for his special treat.

What a great evening it was, complete with all the trappings of a special five-course dinner in the mid-1800's, all planned by Dianne Snodgrass -- a warm welcome by a butler, a staff of ten impeccable servers, antique linens, silver, crystal and fine china, and the opportunity to signal the course of events with a dinner bell.

The rest of us will have to try again next year!

ANOTHER WINNER

Mary Hosepion of Haddonfield took home the Franklin Mint Bru Bride Doll which had been donated to the Society for the November Doll Day celebrations as a fund-raiser. The Society thanks the Franklin Mint and all who participated for their donations.

POCKET PARK GARDENERS

During the summer of 1996, Nancy Burrough initiated a long-range program to restore the grounds and gardens of Greenfield Hall. As part of her plan, she enlisted the help of Society members, now known as the Pocket Park Gardeners. Each gardener has been responsible, over the years, for maintaining an area approximately twenty feet long.

All gardeners do their jobs at times convenient to them. They have eradicated poison ivy, removed trees and dead limbs, eliminated the ivy from the garage and done away with weeds. The Memorial Garden is in place and new trees have been planted. We're looking so much better.

Of course, more remains to be done in the way of landscaping. Outdoor maintenance is always an ongoing job. If you can help in any way, please call Nancy at 429-8361. She'll be happy to hear your suggestions as to what can be done and will let you set up your own gardening schedule.

Come early and stay all day.

The Village Fair holds many delights for everyone.

Don't miss it!!

DOMESTIC COLLECTIONS

By Don Wallace

My recent columns have emphasized our farm husbandry tools such as bull leads and horn dockers. Haddonfield had become an agrarian community long ago while we shared the land with the Pre-Columbian Renape Nation, and farming continued here until the early years of the twentieth century. In addition to our farm tools though, we have a major collection of domestic implements known today as household artifacts and kitchen collectibles

A most recent donation to the distaff (dishwasher) side of the museum cellars is a collection of four "soap savers" and a chipped, white enamel dishpan. We hope to demonstrate to fourth graders the way their great-grandmothers washed dishes in the sink (zinc?).

My mother used her soap saver into the 1940's at 313 Chestnut Street in town. Others used the punched sheet metal styles, three in this collection. Now I find myself collecting soap scraps for our demonstrations to come, just as mothers did in the "old days."

As we tour the museum cellars, we go by the first display of coopers' tools, past the pitch forks from the farms and approach the domestic section. There we inform the children that the domestic chores generally performed by the women enabled the men to function more efficiently during the daylight hours at their trades, crafts and farms.

Our significant collection of Pre-Columbian, Stone Age tools in its old display drawers also includes pestles used by the Renape women to grind maize, in addition to axes and arrowheads used by the braves. This collection takes us back at least 7000 years in the history of mutual inter-dependence and a natural cooperation between men and women on this land. Do you think the squaws rolled their eyes when the braves were being macho?

If you would like to save soap in a plastic bag for us, it would be appreciated. If you would like to guide children through the collections, you will find it fun and easy...even gratifying when we get a half hour to rush a group through an overview of the museum cellars.

If you know someone who is both patient and fastidious who would like to transfer small numbers directly to

each tool, please offer this special opportunity for them to volunteer.

I thank all the volunteers who have brought the physical aspects of the museum cellars, during the past six years, to the present state of preservation and development: Larry Alff, Joe Konecny, Stuart Repsher, Don Webb and Gus Winder. Each one has made a breakthrough and participated in our restraint from changing the ceilings and brick floors. It is still a cellar.

WORK IS DONE ON ROOF

By Dianne Snodgrass

Much needed roof work has begun here at Greenfield Hall. It is the very top roof, behind the railings, which is being repaired, the section not seen from the ground. First, the woodwork had to be removed. Then, hoisting up most of the heavier materials required a tall crane; other materials go up through the building. A new trap door, animal- and leak-proof, has been installed. Perhaps you have had a glimpse of Steve Foss and his assistant maneuvering about way up there.

After the flat work is completed, Tom Applegate will restore and reinstall the railings. This should hold us for a good long time and I, for one, shall be very happy not to smell wet plaster and wood when working on the textiles in the third floor. I am happy also about the tree removal from the west side. The tree was the animal interstate to the chimney and crawl space.

COME AND GET IT

Have you noticed that a lot of trees have been
cut down on the grounds of
Greenfield Hall?

If you need firewood for the next season,
come out and help yourself.

Be sure to bring the necessary equipment
to cut and split your own.

Call the office at 856-429-7375
for more information.

THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

by Barbara Hilgen

The second annual New Members' Reception and Open House was held in Greenfield Hall on Sunday afternoon, February 25. Many long-time, new and prospective members took advantage of the opportunity to socialize, see the many collections and sample "Old Pease Soup." Many thanks to all who helped to make this a most enjoyable event.



Because it is the first month of our new fiscal year, May is also our **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL MONTH**. The entire membership, with the exception of Life Members, will receive renewal notices. If you became a member or renewed your membership in 2001, please note this on your form and return it to the office.

We are grateful for each and every membership and are looking forward to 100% renewal this year.

A BIG WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Gene and Kim D'Orazio Beth Zimmerman Fred and Donna Maccherone

Paul and Debra Nussbaum Maria Savage Robin and Bob Stiles



Please use this convenient application form as an invitation for your friends, neighbors and relatives to join in our fun and fellowship.

Along with membership come free tours, 4 *Bulletins* yearly, a 10% discount on our books and commemoratives, and notices of all special events. With your support, we can perpetuate the Society as the invaluable community resource that it is.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HADDONFIELD 1999-2000

I (We) would like to join the Historical Society of Haddonfield. The type of membership desired is:

() Individual	\$ 20.00
() Household	35.00
() Contributing (per person)	50.00
() Greenfield Circle (per person)	100.00
() Gill Society (per person)	200.00
() Life Membership (per person)	500.00

Name _____ E-mail _____

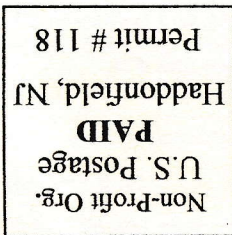
Address _____ Telephone _____

Please mail to the Society at Greenfield Hall, 343 King's Highway East, Haddonfield, NJ 08033

WE NEED YOU

...on the first Sunday of the month. In order to continue to keep our museum open on this extra day each month, we need more volunteers. You'll enjoy being a guide in lovely Greenfield Hall. Call the office at 429-7375 to say you'll be happy to help.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER



The Historical Society of Haddonfield
343 King's Highway East
Haddonfield, New Jersey 08033

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HADDONFIELD 2000-2001

Officers

President	Joseph Murphy
Vice President	Robert Marshall
Treasurer	Helene Zimmer-Loew
Recording Secretary	Barbara Crane
Corresponding Secretary	Patricia Lennon
Legal Counsel	John Reisner
<i>Bulletin</i> Editor	Constance B. Reeves

Trustees

Term expires 2001	Richard Bird Jack Tarditi Deborah Troemner Deborah Mervine
Term expires 2002	Joe Haro Marge Engleman Thomas B. Mervine, Jr. Nancy Martin
Term expires 2003	Sandra Ragonese Warren Reintzel Dianne Snodgrass Karen Weaver